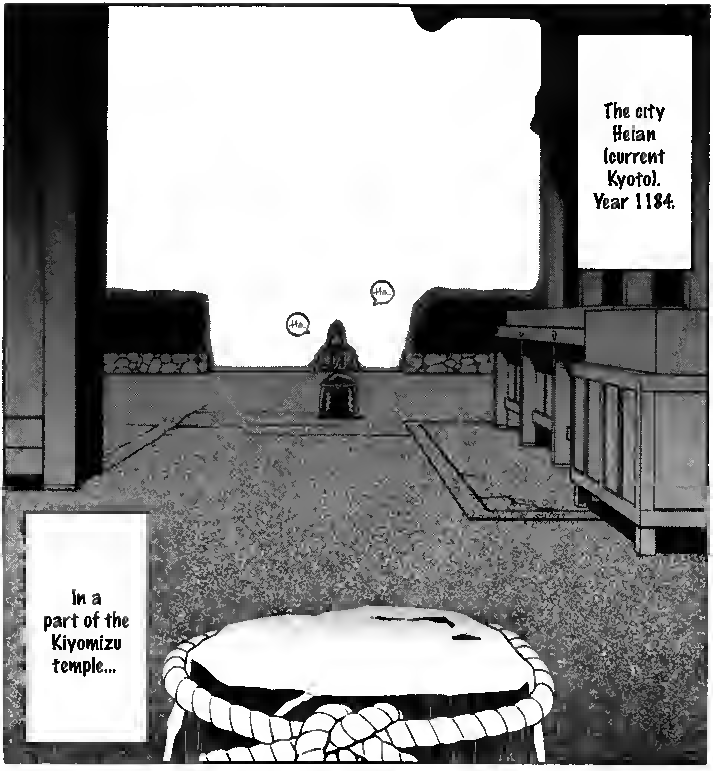
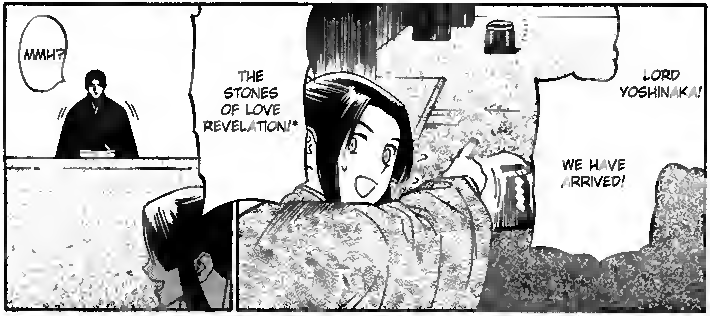
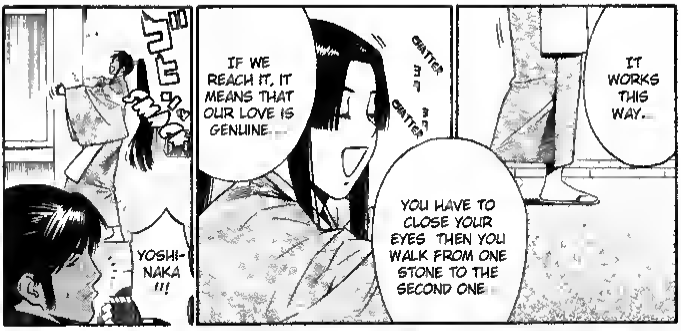
Chapter 9: Predictions of an impossible love...





*KIYOMIZU IS A CLUSTER OF SHRINES ON A PROPERTY OVERLOOKING KYOTO. KIYOMIZU IN KYOTO WAS FOUNDED BEFORE 800 A.D. THE JISHU-JINJA SHRINE IS DEDICATED TO OKUNINUSHINO-MIKOTO THE JAPANESE GOD OF LOVE AND MATCH MAKING. THE SHRINE INCLUDES A PAIR OF "LOVE STONES" THAT SIT ABOUT 60 FEET FROM EACH OTHER. VISITORS TRY TO WALK BETWEEN WITH THEIR EYES CLOSED. IF THEY SUCCEED THEY SUPPOSEDLY WILL FIND TRUE LOVE. SOMEONE CAN HELP THE WALKER, BUT THAT MEANS THAT WILL NEED A GO BETWEEN WITH THEIR FUTURE TRUE LOVE. ONE CAN BE ASSISTED IN THE CROSSING. BUT THIS IS TAKEN TO MEAN THAT AN INTERMEDIARY WILL BE NEEDED!!

TOMOE!
LOVE REVELATION?
AHAHAH! MAY I REMIND YOU THAT WE HAVE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE BIRTH!
Shogun
Kiso (Minamoto) Jirô Yoshinaka
HEIAN IS A DANGEROUS TOWN FOR OUR CLAN! YOU MAKE US TAKE RISKS FOR THIS ?
I'LL GO FIRST, THEN IT'S YOUR TURN...
ALL RIGHT I UNDERSTAND!
Ahahah
AHAH!
AH, WOMEN! THEY ONLY THINK ABOUT LOVE!
WHAT ABOUT IT?
IF WE CAME AS FAR AS HEIAN IT WAS TO ASK FOR THE STONES'S ADVICE!
YES, YES...


YOSHI-NAKA !!!
IF WE REACH IT, IT MEANS THAT OUR LOVE IS GENUINE...
GRITTER
GRITTER
YOU HAVE TO CLOSE YOUR EYES. THEN YOU WALK FROM ONE STONE TO THE SECOND ONE.
IT WORKS THIS WAY...

YORITOMO AND HIS ARMY REACHED THE HILLS. THEY ARE ABOUT TO ENTER HEIAN!
Imai Shirokanehira
MMH?
WHAT HAPPENED?
TOP TOP SPLAC!
YOU LOOK PANI-CKED!

THEY HAVE 60. 000 MEN...
THEY JOINED FORCES WITH YOSHITSUNE AND NORIYORI...
HOW?

IF THEY ATTACK US, WE WON'T LAST LONG... WE ARE DONE FOR...
WE HAVE AT MOST 6 TO 7000 MEN...
...
WE NEED TO CATCH THEM BY SURPRISE! LET'S HURRY!
BUT WAIT...
Suri
TOMOE! WE ARE HEADING BACK!
WE NEED TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR COMBAT!
BE QUIET!
I DON'T BELIEVE IN NUMBERS!
...what would I be at the present time...
If I had succeeded in reaching the second stone...

I DON'T WANT DEATH TO SEPARATE ME FROM MY BELOVED ONES AGAIN!
This battle has been a massacre... I survived but death separated me from Yoshinaka and all my friends... I won't live through this suffering ever again!

AND I WANT TO BE NEAR YOU... AKUBE!
IF IT MEANS LIVING TOGETHER, WE COULD AS WELL DIE TOGETHER!

WOOSH

SWISH
APP
!!
THE ARMY OF THE MASKS!
DISGUISED?

THUD
HAA!
THE VOICE OF A WOMAN?
TOKUGE
HOW DARE YOU...
...COMPARE ME TO THAT ARMY OF USELESS FOOLS!
WH
SLAMGS
SLASH!
YAAAAAA!
MR. BONGE'S
THUD

EEK
HII!
This weapon-tech nique
I KNOW IT!
I HAVE CHALLENGED HER HUNDREDS OF TIMES SINCE CHILDHOOD!
MAYBE EVEN THOUSANDS!

THUMP
...AOI?
WELL JUDGED.

I'M SORRY TO BE SO FRANK BUT
YOU ARE GOING TO DIE...
TOMOE!
DASH
WH...!
BUT YOU DIED DURING THE KURIKARA BATTLE!!!
SLASHES
!
YES!
I DIED. TOMOE...
BUT I REALIZED THAT DEATH ONLY MEANT REBIRTH...
SLASHES

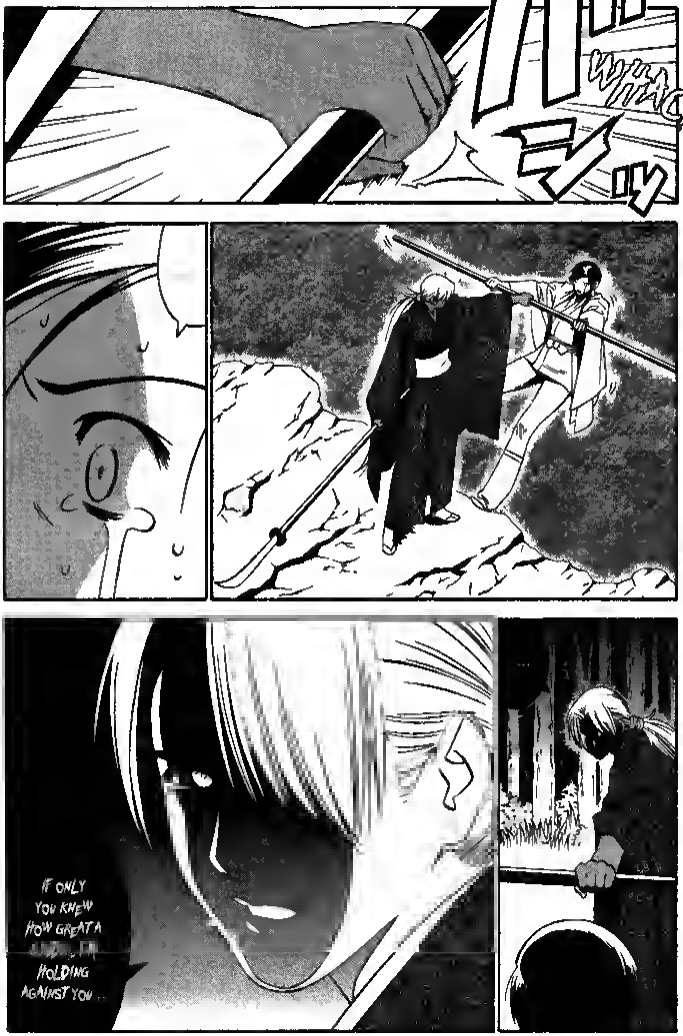
clink
BUT... BUT WH...
WHY WOULD I FIGHT YOU?
clash
CRASH
YOU SHOULD ALREADY HAVE NOTICED IT, RIGHT?
YOSHINAKA ASKED ME TO BRING YOU BACK ALIVE BUT...
WH...
WHAT?
BANG
IS HE ALIVE?
YOSHINAKA SHE REALLY DID MENTION YOSHINAKA!

You know, dying isn't such a terrible thing...
And besides, we women endure pain well...
What?
Oh, but don't worry!
I don't care whether you are dead or alive...
SLASH!!!

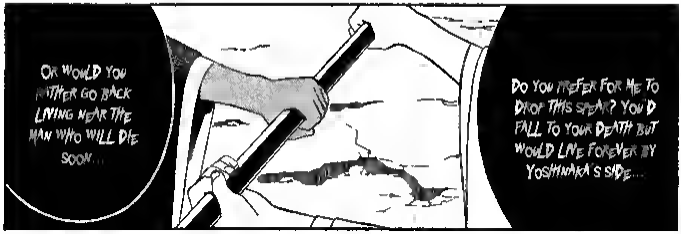
AH, I SEE...
Not the real one?
I always get a bad but well...
AND YOU TOO!
YOU ARE NOT THE REAL AOI!
YOSHINAKA IS DEAD!
BUT...
IT SEEMS YOU ARE IN LOVE WITH A CERTAIN AKUBE!
A MAN FROM THE HEIJI CLAN!
YOU ARE NOT STUPID ENOUGH TO BELIEVE THAT HE WANTS YOU. ARE YOU?
OF COURSE I BELIEVE IT! YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT AKUBE!
BANG
AND YOU? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM? EH?
WHAT...

AH.. YES?
I THINK HE'S ONLY FIGHTING FOR HIMSELF.. AND NOT FOR YOU!
BUT HE PROTECTED ME SEVERAL TIMES!
NO, I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT HIM!
WH..
SLASH
AKUBE IS POWERFUL SO I CAN UNDERSTAND.
THESE GHOSTS ARE STRONGER NOW THAN THEY WERE BEFORE THEY DIED..
DON'T YOU FIND IT STRANGE YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, YOU, A WOMAN?
I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!
IF YOU ARE STILL ALIVE, IT'S BECAUSE OUR ORDERS ARE TO BRING YOU BACK ALIVE....
LIKE I CARE?

IT WASN'T AKUBE BUT YOSHINAKA WHO HAS BEEN PROTECTING YOU FROM THE START!
STUMBLE

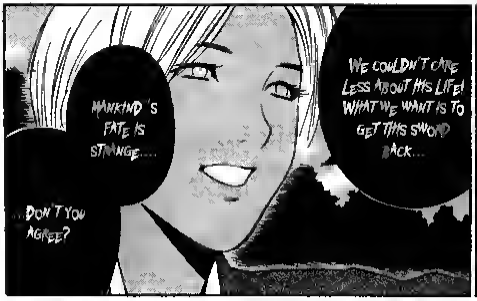

WHACK
IF ONLY YOU KNEW HOW GREAT A
HOLDING AGAINST YOU...

WHETHER YOU ARE DEAD OR ALIVE, IT'S THE SAME FOR US...
BUT HE'S ANXIOUS TO ASK FOR YOUR OPINION...
CLENCHES
YOSHINARA...
IT'S ALWAYS BEEN ABOUT YOU...
AND TO THINK THAT I LOVE HIM MORE THAN ANYONE!
I'M ABLE TO DIE SEVERAL TIMES FOR HIM!
EVIL STARE
TOMOE...
I'LL LEAVE YOU A CHOICE...
WHAT?


Or would you rather go back living near the man who will die soon...
Do you prefer for me to drop this spear? You'd fall to your death but would live forever by Yoshinaka's side...

We are thousands against him! We can reinforce our troops indefinitively!
He only has his sword to protect himself... How can you expect him to cope against thousands of soldiers?

Di...
die soon?
Of course!


We couldn't care less about his life! What we want is to get this sword back...
Mankind's fate is strange...
...don't you agree?

AZA-MARU...

YOSHINAKA AND ALL OF YOUR FRIENDS...
YAMAZUKI...
I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU, TOMOE...
FA...
...FATE?
WHATEVER YOU CHOOSE. YOU'LL DIE ONE DAY AND LEAVE THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE BEHIND...
SO WHY DO YOU NEED SO MUCH TIME TO THINK IT OVER?
THERE IS NO POINT IN THINKING.

NO, I DON'T WANT TO!
IF I DROP THIS SPEAR, YOU'LL SEE ALL OF US AGAIN...
YAMADUKI AWAITS YOU TOO

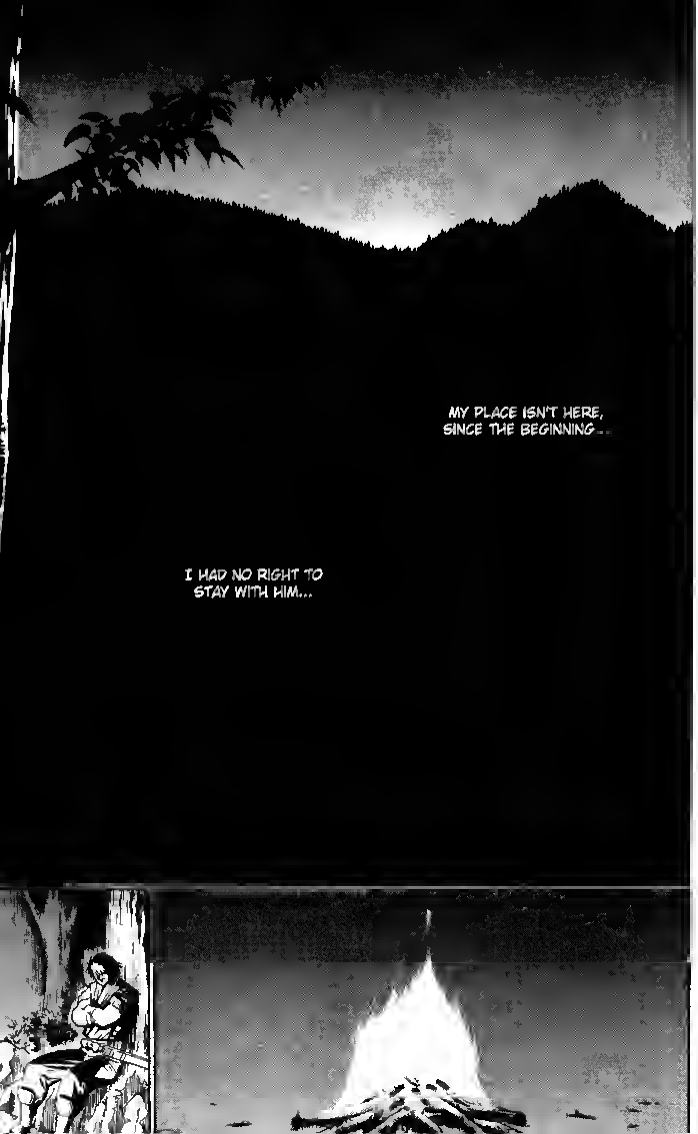
ARE YOU SURE?

BY THE WAY, WHERE DID TOMOE GO?
HMM?
NO IDEA...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
FOR THE BETTER NOW WE CAN TALK PRIVATELY...WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO WITH HER?
I WONDERED IF YOU'D STILL LET HER FOLLOW US...
SHE'S VERY STRONG, BUT IN MY OPINION SHE WON'T MAKE IT MUCH LONGER...
AND I'D LIKE TO HEAR YOUR ADVICE ON THIS MATTER...

I NEVER ASKED HER TO FOLLOW...
SHE IS DOING WHATEVER SHE WANTS!
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED, AKUBE...
YOU ARE STILL SO INSENSIBLE WITH WOMEN... HAHAHA!
BY CHANGING YOUR IDENTITY, YOU THINK YOU ARE ABLE TO ESCAPE FROM YOUR PAST, BUT YOU ARE BASICALLY THE SAME!
THWACK
THE PAST?
SLASH
thudde

THE PAST IS LIKE THESE SCARS REFLECTED ON AZAMARU... IT CAN'T DISAPPEAR..
YOU ARE PROBABLY RIGHT, IENAGA...
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH TOMOE?
YOU HAVE A SOFT SPOT FOR HER, RIGHT?
IF YOU DO, TELL HER SO!
THE POOR GIRL, DON'T LET HER GO THROUGH TORMENT...
YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT TOMOE IS THE ASSASSIN OF YOUR BROTHER TADATSUNA...
DO YOU THINK YOU ARE ABLE TO MAKE THIS PAST DISAPPEAR?

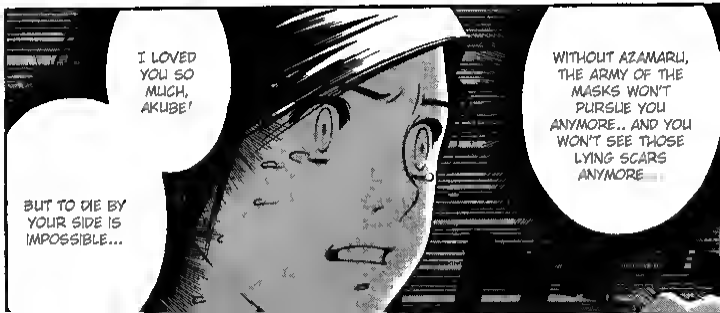
TADATSUNE WAS
AKUBE'S BROTHER?!


MY PLACE ISN'T HERE,
SINCE THE BEGINNING...
I HAD NO RIGHT TO
STAY WITH HIM...

AKUBE!
UP!
HMM?
YES
AKUBE!!
AKUBE...
A VERY LONG TIME
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE SEEN YOU SLEEP SO SOUNDLY...
YES, INDEED
BUT/
WHAT DO WE DO? SHALL WE LEAVE WITHOUT HER?
TOMOE HASN'T COME BACK AFTER ALL...

WHAT IS IT?
?
MY SWORD HAS DISAP-PEARED!
AZAMARU HAS DISAPPEARED!
STEP.
FAREWELL!
AKUBE!

AKUBE I'M FLEEING WITH THIS SWORD WHICH IS MAKING YOU SUFFER
YOU WILL FORGET ABOUT YOUR SCARS
BUT MY PAST YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FORGET IT


I LOVED YOU SO MUCH, AKUBE!
WITHOUT AZAMARU, THE ARMY OF THE MASKS WON'T PURSUE YOU ANYMORE.. AND YOU WON'T SEE THOSE LYING SCARS ANYMORE
BUT TO DIE BY YOUR SIDE IS IMPOSSIBLE...

THAT BITCH!!!
カ
チャ
click
SHE TRICKED US!!!
カ
チャ
click
IF I HAD KNOWN, I'D HAVE KILLED HER FROM THE START!!!
カ
チャ
click
WAKE UP, MORON!!
AKUBE!
YOU NEED TO GET YOUR SWORD BACK!
IT'S YOUR FAULT!
LET'S GO!!!
TOMOE
...

DOGGING TOMOE'S FOOTSTEPS

DON'T TOUCH TOMOE!
WHAT IS IT AGAIN?
WAIT!
AH, REALLY?
POC
USELESS FOOL!
WOULD YOU RATHER DIE BEFORE HER?

AKUBE!
I WISH FOR YOU TO LIVE!

trembles
7"
7" GRABS
You are scared shitless!
If you may excuse this expression...
HAHAHA
I see that you fear death
SHAKES
7"
7"
Bwah!
Come
Hypocrite!
Ugly woman!
Look at yourself!
Bitch!
Slut!
Tart!
Imbecile!

RATTLE
RATTLE
YOSHINAKA AKUBE...
FORGET EVERYTHING!
DISAPPEAR AS FAR AS YOU CAN!
FORGET EVERYTHING!
TOMOE...
SHUDDERS
SO FORGET HIM BEFORE HE DIES!
YOU'LL SUFFER LESS IN PARTING WITH HIM IN SUCH A WAY!
ANYWAY, AS LONG AS AKUBE IS IN POSSESSION OF THIS SWORD, I DON'T GIVE MUCH FOR HIS CHANCES TO SURVIVE

AZAMARU

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Volume 02 Chapter 3

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